

SEE MORE WHEN YOU *explore*

Oh, Those Wily Wild Things!

Ever wonder where all the wildlife is when you're walking in nature? They're probably hiding because they've already seen or heard you coming their way! It takes both time and skill to become an expert animal tracker, but these simple practices will get you well on your way to (carefully!) catching wildlife unawares on your next hike!

Be mindful. Slow down your breathing, focus your attention, and be in the moment. Try not to worry or think about other things (this is called practicing mindfulness). By settling yourself and walking slowly, you will be better able to move among the birds and animals without scaring them.

Sense your surroundings. Smell the air. Listen to the different sounds. Feel the textures of nature: the soft grass, the rough tree bark, the silky water, and the wind in your hair. Taste the rain on your tongue. And use your eyes to look up, down, and all around for signs of wildlife!

Put on your "deer ears". The size and shape of deer's ears help them hear when danger approaches. You can put on your deer ears by cupping your hands behind your ears (palms facing forward) to help you hear sounds in front of you. Cup your hands in front of your ears (palms facing backward) to help you hear behind you. How much better do you hear with your deer ears on?

Relax your gaze. Don't try too hard to see anything specific! By softening your gaze and looking *through* nature rather than focusing on a single thing, you will be more likely to notice the movements of birds and animals over a wider area. A related skill is using "wide eyes" so that you can see more of your surroundings. Stand with your arms in front of you at shoulder height. Soften your gaze and look at your hands. Now slowly move your arms (still at shoulder height) out towards your sides until you can no longer see your hands. With practice you will be able to see your hands further and further apart (maybe 180 degrees!) and much more of your surroundings!

Walk like a fox. Make as little noise as possible when observing wildlife by walking like a fox. Choose a quiet path without lots of crunchy leaves or branches and keep your strides short. Take a step by lowering your foot and placing it very lightly on the ground, with just the outside edge touching. As you slowly roll the whole foot down onto the ground, gradually put all of your weight onto the foot. Repeat and soon you'll be walking like a fox! Take your time and have lots of patience. Fox walking is best done barefoot.



The Exploration Club for Families... NatureKids BC helps children get outdoors to play, imagine and explore in nearby nature. Join a family nature club near you or become a free-range member. Find out more at: www.naturekidsbc.ca. If you are already a member you can use this activity as part of your Action Awards Quest!



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